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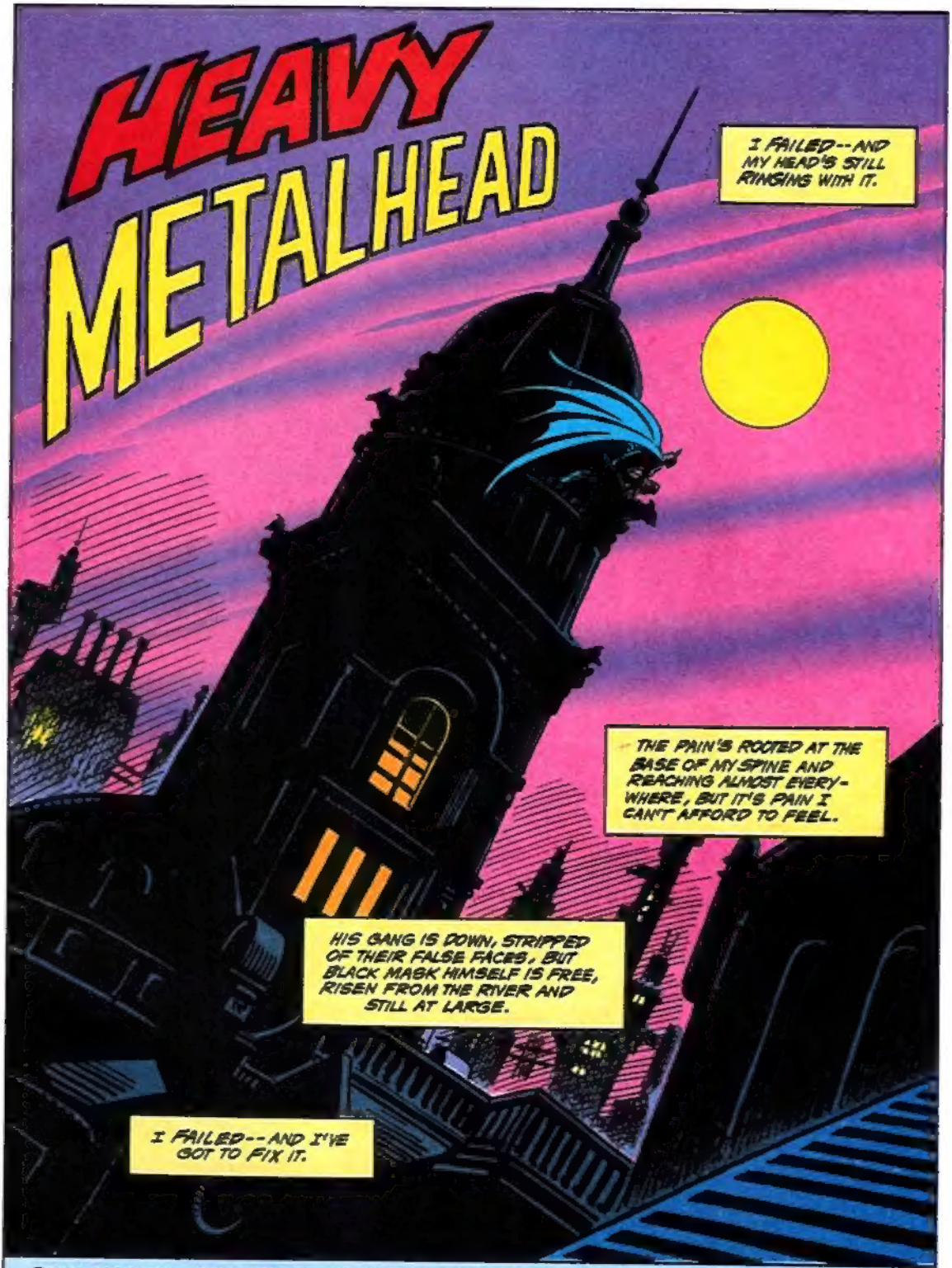
METALHEAD!


HEAVY METALHEAD
I FAILED--AND MY HEAD'S STILL RINGING WITH IT.
THE PAIN'S ROOTED AT THE BASE OF MY SPINE AND REACHING ALMOST EVERY-WHERE, BUT IT'S PAIN I CAN'T AFFORD TO FEEL.
HIS GANG IS DOWN, STRIPPED OF THEIR FALSE FACES, BUT BLACK MASK HIMSELF IS FREE, RISEN FROM THE RIVER AND STILL AT LARGE.
I FAILED--AND I'VE GOT TO FIX IT.

DOUG MOENCH WRITER | JIM APARO ART/LETTERS | ADRIENNE ROY COLORIST | SCOTT PETERSON ASST. EDITOR | DENNIS O'NEIL EDITOR | BOB KANE CREATOR

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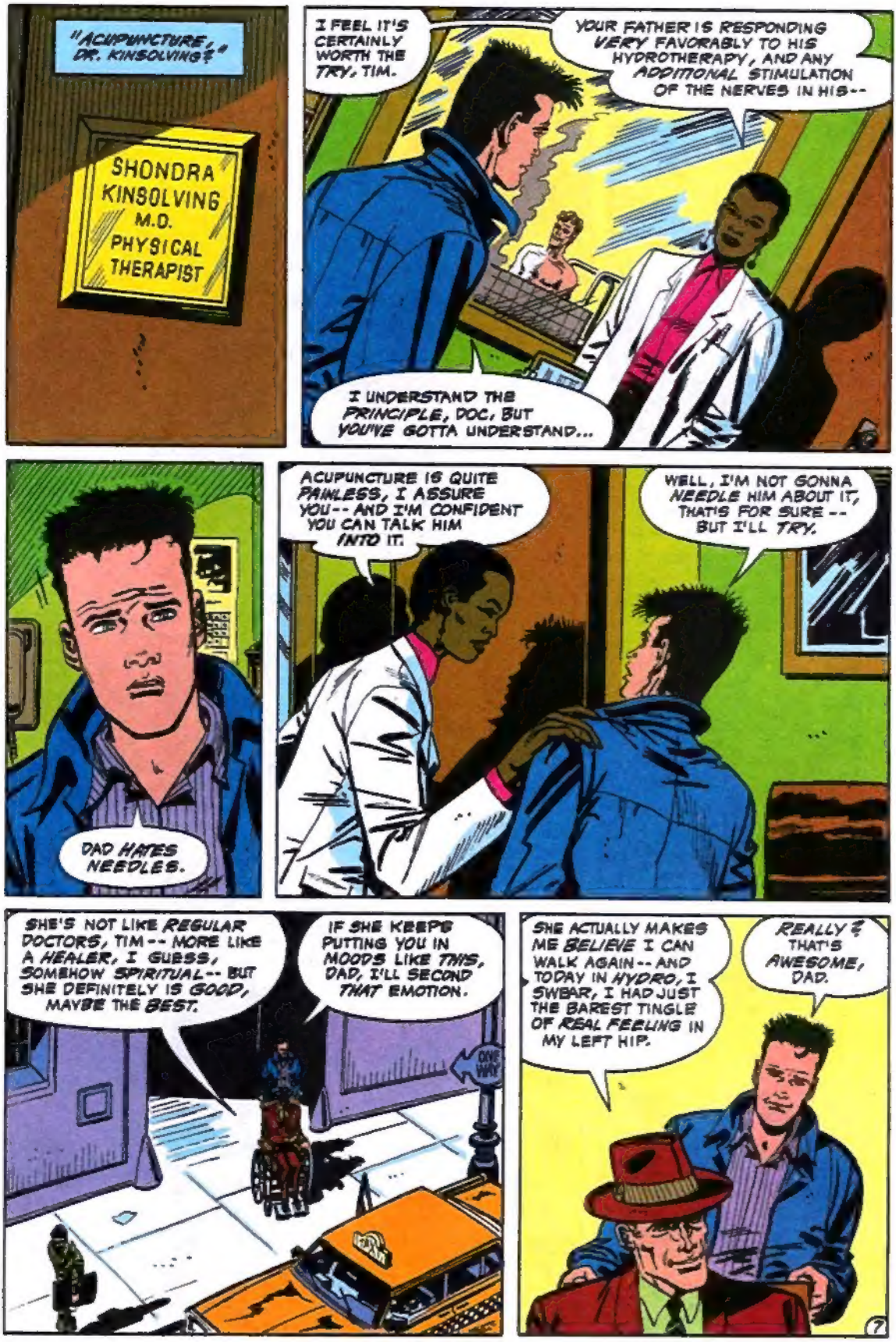
SEARCHED THE WHOLE NIGHT-- AND NO SIGN OF HIM ANYWHERE, NOT A WORD FROM THE SHADOWS, NOT A GLIMMER FROM THE DARKNESS.
MY NOSE WON'T STOP BLEEDING.
PSHAK
ALMOST DAWN.
TIME TO SHIFT TACTICS.
AND TO HELL WITH THE BLOOD.
I SAID... I'M LOOKING FOR SOMEONE.
PHEENEY'S
YEAH? WELL, IF IT'S THE GREAT PUMPKIN YOU'RE LOOKIN' FOR...
...IT'S A LITTLE EARLY FOR HALLOWEEN.
ASK ME, HE IS THE GREAT PUMPKIN.
2

COMEDIANS.
I HATE COMEDIANS.
SWAFFF

BUKSH
HEY! WHADDAYOU THINK YOU'RE D--
OOOPH!
SHUFT
KRATCH
I... I'M BLEEDIN'...
HE... STUCK MY GUT... STUCK ME... LIKE A PIG...
FOR THE THIRD TIME... I'M LOOKING FOR SOMEONE.
I'M LOOKING FOR... BLACK MASK.
4

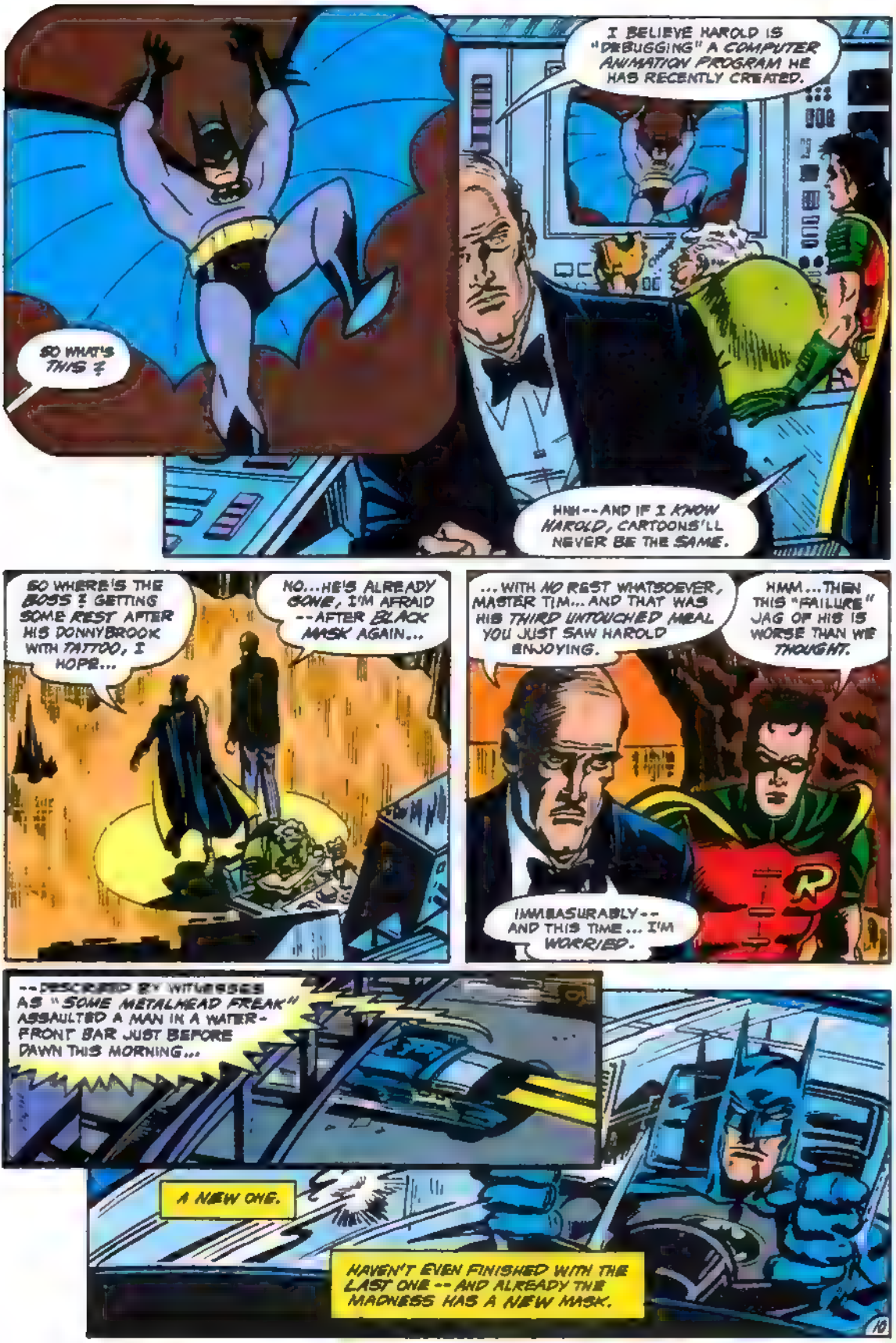
B-BLACK MASK...? BUT HE...HE'S D-DEAD... THE BATMAN THREW HIM IN THE RIVER OR SOMETHIN'... FIVE, SIX HOURS AGO... JUST DOWN THE DOCKS HERE...
UH-UH, MIKE... YOU DIDN'T HEAR THE RADIO LATER... SAID IT WASN'T MASK THEY FISHED OUTTA THE WATER...
AND IF HE ISN'T DEAD, WHERE DO I FIND HIM?
I... I DUNNO, MAN... MAYBE WHERE HIS GANG USED TO HANG OUT...
TRY SHARKEY'S, MAYBE...
...SHARKEY'S POOL HALL.
S-STUCK ME... B-BLEEDIN'...
I'LL DO THAT...
PUBENEY'S
...AFTER I GET SOME SLEEP.
5

"--REALLY SHOULD GET SOME SLEEP, SIR..."
NO TIME--AND TAKE AWAY THAT TRAY, ALFRED.
I'M NOT HUNGRY.
KMPH.
VERY WELL, SIR, I CAN UNDERSTAND SELF-IMPOSED STARVATION AND SLEEP-DEPRIVATION...
...BUT IF YOUR NOSE IS BROKEN--
IT CAN BE RE-BROKEN AND SET LATER.
NOW JUST LET ME WORK.
SIR, REFUSING TO DO THAT WHICH ONE KNOWS ONE SHOULD DO IS A SIGN OF--
DON'T PREACH TO ME, ALFRED.
I DON'T CARE WHAT I SHOULD DO--I'M DOING WHAT I'VE GOT TO DO.
YES, SIR.
6


"ACUPUNCTURE, DR. KINSOLVING?"
SHONDRA KINSOLVING M.D. PHYSICAL THERAPIST
I FEEL IT'S CERTAINLY WORTH THE TRY, TIM.
YOUR FATHER IS RESPONDING VERY FAVORABLY TO HIS HYDROTHERAPY, AND ANY ADDITIONAL STIMULATION OF THE NERVES IN HIS--
I UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLE, DOC, BUT YOU'VE GOTTA UNDERSTAND...
DAD HATES NEEDLES.
ACUPUNCTURE IS QUITE PAINLESS, I ASSURE YOU-- AND I'M CONFIDENT YOU CAN TALK HIM INTO IT.
WELL, I'M NOT GONNA NEEDLE HIM ABOUT IT, THAT'S FOR SURE -- BUT I'LL TRY.
SHE'S NOT LIKE REGULAR DOCTORS, TIM -- MORE LIKE A HEALER, I GUESS, SOMEHOW SPIRITUAL-- BUT SHE DEFINITELY IS GOOD, MAYBE THE BEST.
IF SHE KEEPS PUTTING YOU IN MOODS LIKE THIS, DAD, I'LL SECOND THAT EMOTION.
ONE WAY
SHE ACTUALLY MAKES ME BELIEVE I CAN WALK AGAIN -- AND TODAY IN HYDRO, I SWEAR, I HAD JUST THE BAREST TINGLE OF REAL FEELING IN MY LEFT HIP.
REALLY? THAT'S AWESOME, DAD.
7

I TELL YOU, I THINK I JUST MIGHT DO ANYTHING THAT WOMAN ASKED.
I'M GLAD YOU SAID THAT, DAD, AND I SURE HOPE THE SENTIMENT INCLUDES BEING TURNED INTO--
--A HUMAN PINCUSHION.
ALL THESE FILES, REPORTS, NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS-- AND NOTHING.
NOT ONE NEW LINE ON HIM, EITHER AS BLACK MASK OR ROMAN SIONIS.
I'VE ALREADY THOUGHT OF EVERYTHING, LOOKED IN EVERY OBVIOUS PLACE...
DEET DEET DEET
AND NOW IT'S DARK AGAIN.
NOTHING TO DO BUT KEEP LOOKING--IN THE PLACES THAT AREN'T OBVIOUS...

... AND THEN LOOK AGAIN IN THE PLACES THAT ARE.
KRAOWWW!!
I'M LOOKING FOR SOMEONE...
SHARKEY
YEAH-- AND I'LL BET HE'S A REAL KINKY CUTIE.
EITHER THAT OR A PORCUPINE.
MORE COMEDIANS.
AND I STILL HATE COMEDIANS...
WHFF
WHFFF
WHFFF!

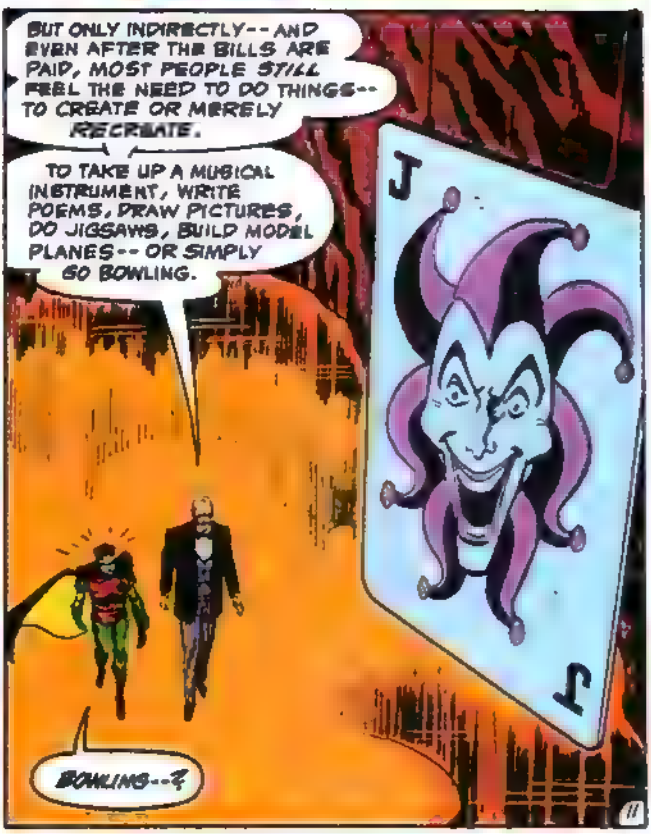

SO WHAT'S THIS ?
I BELIEVE HAROLD IS "DEBUGGING" A COMPUTER ANIMATION PROGRAM HE HAS RECENTLY CREATED.
HMM--AND IF I KNOW HAROLD, CARTOONS'LL NEVER BE THE SAME.
SO WHERE'S THE BOSS ? GETTING SOME REST AFTER HIS DONNYBROOK WITH TATTOO, I HOPE...
NO...HE'S ALREADY GONE, I'M AFRAID --AFTER BLACK MASK AGAIN...
...WITH NO REST WHATSOEVER, MASTER TIM... AND THAT WAS HIS THIRD UNTOUCHED MEAL YOU JUST SAW HAROLD ENJOYING.
HMM...THEN THIS "FAILURE" JAG OF HIS IS WORSE THAN WE THOUGHT.
IMMEASURABLY-- AND THIS TIME... I'M WORRIED.
--DESCRIBED BY WITNESSES AS "SOME METALHEAD FREAK" ASSAULTED A MAN IN A WATER-FRONT BAR JUST BEFORE DAWN THIS MORNING...
A NEW ONE.
HAVEN'T EVEN FINISHED WITH THE LAST ONE -- AND ALREADY THE MADNESS HAS A NEW MASK.

I DON'T GET IT-- WHY CAN'T HE JUST SLOW DOWN A LITTLE?
I'VE OFTEN WONDERED THAT MYSELF, AND THE EASY ANSWER IS THAT HE CAN'T.

YOU MEAN HE'S OBSESSED.
ALSO TOO EASY ...BUT HAVE YOU EVER PONDERED THE HUMAN DRIVE TO CONSTANTLY DO THINGS?
RATHER THAN WHAT? VEGETATE?

I MEAN... TO DO THINGS BEYOND THE MINIMUM REQUIRED.
OBVIOUSLY, THE URGE MUST DERIVE FROM SORT OF A SURVIVAL MECHANISM-- THE NEED TO BUILD SHELTER, TO HUNT FOOD OR, LATER HARVEST FOOD.
OKAY...

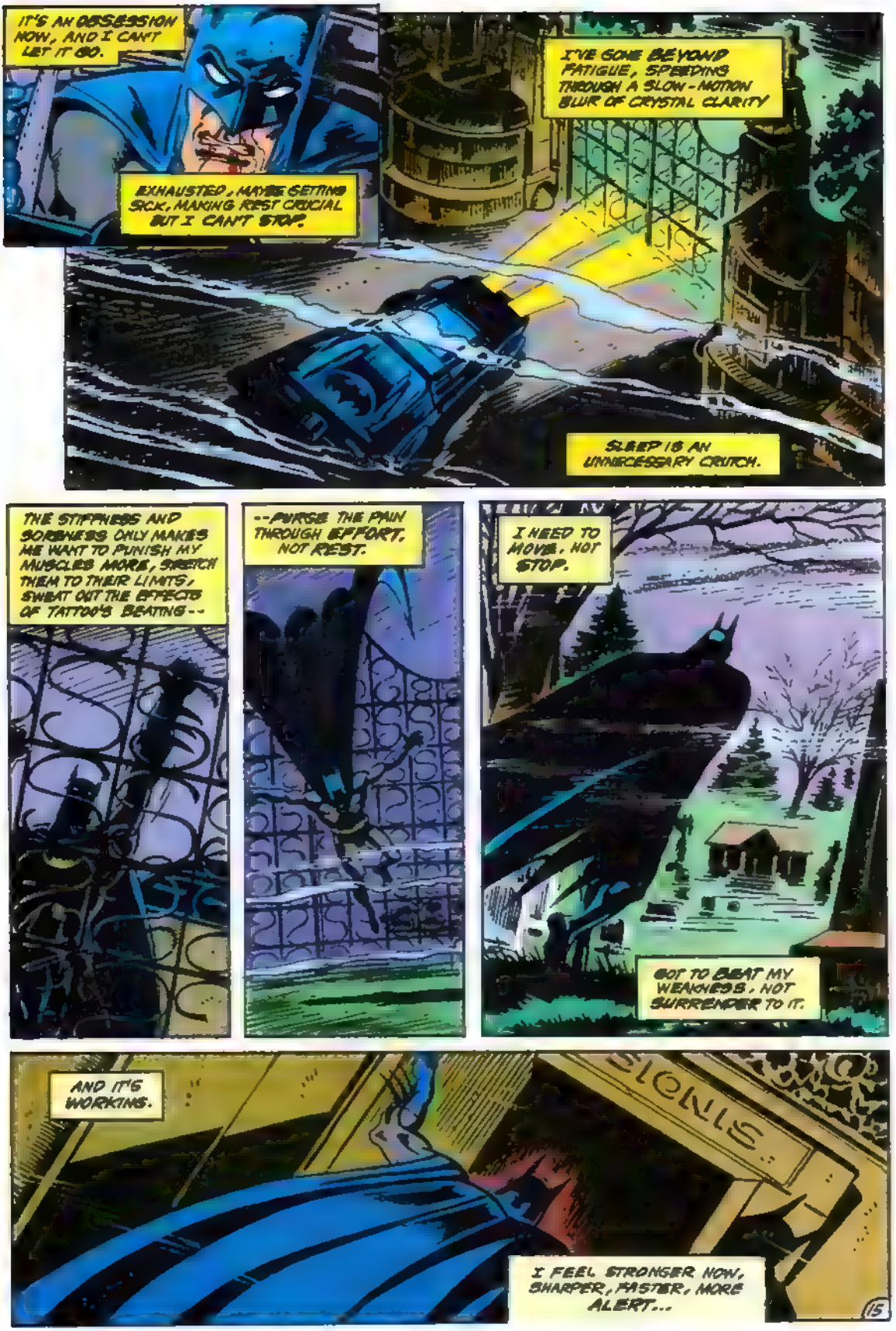
ONE SUSPECTS THAT RESTLESSNESS AND GUILT FEELINGS PLAY A ROLE IN THIS, FOR WITHOUT GUILT OVER INACTIVITY, ONE MIGHT NEVER ACT...
CUT TO THE CHASE, ALFIE. WITH GROCERY BILLS AND RENT TO COVER, EARNING MONEY-- DOING THINGS-- IS STILL A WAY OF "HUNTING FOOD" AND "BUILDING SHELTER."


BUT ONLY INDIRECTLY-- AND EVEN AFTER THE BILLS ARE PAID, MOST PEOPLE STILL FEEL THE NEED TO DO THINGS-- TO CREATE OR MERELY RECREATE.
TO TAKE UP A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT, WRITE POEMS, DRAW PICTURES, DO JIGSAWS, BUILD MODEL PLANES-- OR SIMPLY GO BOWLING.
BOWLING--?
J
J

I'D HARDLY DESCRIBE WHAT THE BATMAN IS DOING TO HIMSELF AS GOING BOWLING.
OF COURSE NOT... BUT HE IS DOING THINGS... EVEN THOUGH AS BRUCE WAYNE, HE'S FAR TOO WEALTHY TO WORRY ABOUT RENT AND GROCERIES.
SO YOUR WHOLE POINT IS THAT HE'S FOUND OTHER THINGS TO DO?
PRECISELY... AND THEY ARE VERY AMBIGUOUS THINGS... WHICH HAVE BEGUN TO PREY ON HIM...
PERHAPS EVEN... CONTROL HIM.
WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
S-SOME GUY... S-SPIKES ON HIS HEAD...
"METALHEAD." WHAT DID HE WANT?
S-BLACK... MASK...
WHAT DID YOU TELL HIM?
12

T-TOLD HIM... NOTHIN'... HE JUST H-HIT ME... SLASHED ME... SO MANY S-SPIKES...
'N-NOTHER GUY S-SAID HE HEARD... ABOUT THE MASK GANG... M-MEETIN' AT SOME... C-CRYPT... IN... CEMETERY...
ONE OF THE OTHER OBVIOUS PLACES -- THE SIONIS FAMILY CRYPT -- ALREADY CHECKED LAST NIGHT.
BUT WHY NOT... ?
NOWHERE ELSE TO GO.
VROOM
SEND AN AMBULANCE -- MAKE THAT SIX AMBULANCES -- TO SHARKEY'S POOL HALL.
AND I FEEL DEAD ANYWAY.
I JUST HOPE THESE DANGEROUS THINGS HE'S CHOSEN TO DO AREN'T KILLING HIM.
WHOA, HOLD UP, ALFIE -- YOU'RE GETTIN' TOO HEAVY ON ME HERE.
JUST WHAT WAS HE CHOSEN TO DO?
TOO MUCH, MASTER TIM, FAR TOO MUCH FOR ANY MAN ON HIS OWN.
HE'S GOT ME, DOESN'T HE?
YES -- AND ME AS WELL, BUT HE'S STILL ALONE... WILL ALWAYS BE ALONE...
13

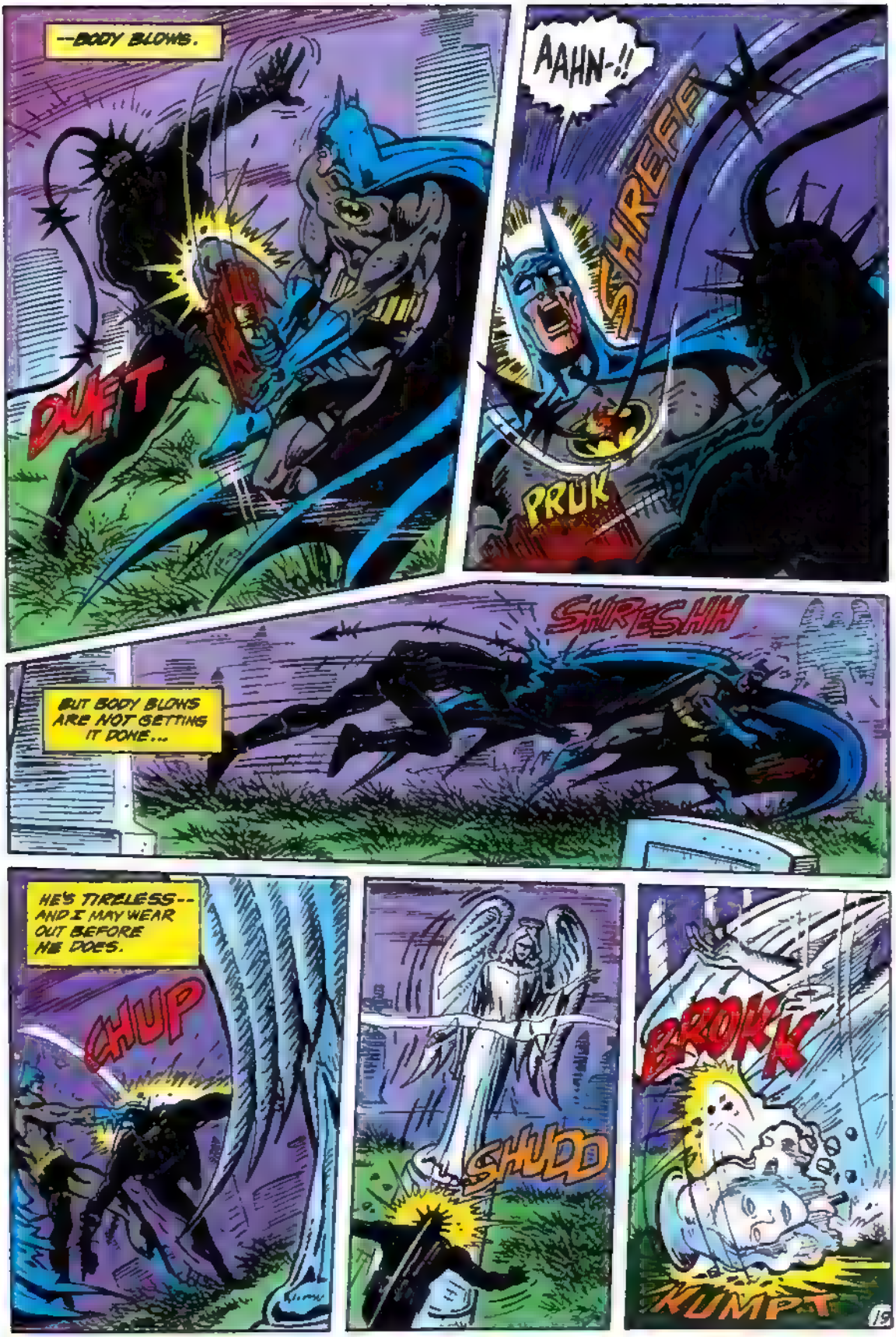
IN ANY CASE... AS BRUCE WAYNE, HE ATTEMPTS TO ADDRESS THE CITY'S EVERY LAST SOCIAL INJUSTICE THROUGH THE WAYNE FOUNDATION, AND AS THE BATMAN--
HE'S TRYING TO AVENGE THE LONG-AGO MURDER OF HIS PARENTS BY JOE CHILL.
YES AND NO, LAD...
PERSONALLY, I'VE ALWAYS BEEN LEERY OF ARMCHAIR PSYCHOLOGIZING-- PRESENT DISCUSSION NOT-WITHSTANDING-- ESPECIALLY THAT WHICH ASSIGNS HIS SOLE MOTIVE TO REVENGE.
THEN WHAT DO YOU CALL IT?
ON THE SURFACE IT'S A MORE OVERT WAY OF ADDRESSING INJUSTICE-- BY BRINGING CRIMINALS TO JUSTICE.
IF A WISE MAN'S MISTAKES ARE THE TRIUMPHS OF A FOOL, YOU SEE, THEN EVERY GUILTY MAN WHO "GETS AWAY WITH IT" IS PUNISHMENT OF THE INNOCENT.
NOT BAD, ALFIE... BUT UNDER THE SURFACE?
I PERCEIVE HIS MOTIVE MORE AS COMPASSION THAN REVENGE-- ONE LONG ATTEMPT TO PREVENT HIS PARENTS' FATE, AND HIS OWN FATE, FROM BEFALLING OTHERS.
OKAY... BUT IF IT'S NOT AN OBSESSION, WHY IS HE DRIVING HIMSELF INTO THE GROUND OVER IT?
BECAUSE IT'S WHAT HE DOES, MASTER TIM...
...AND IT MAY WELL BE THAT HE KNOWS HOW TO DO NOTHING ELSE.
14


IT'S AN OBSESSION NOW, AND I CAN'T LET IT GO.
EXHAUSTED, MAYBE GETTING SICK, MAKING REST CRUCIAL BUT I CAN'T STOP.
I'VE GONE BEYOND FATIGUE, SPEEDING THROUGH A SLOW-MOTION BLUR OF CRYSTAL CLARITY
SLEEP IS AN UNNECESSARY CRUTCH.
THE STIFFNESS AND SORENESS ONLY MAKES ME WANT TO PUNISH MY MUSCLES MORE, STRETCH THEM TO THEIR LIMITS, SWEAT OUT THE EFFECTS OF TATTOO'S BEATING--
--PURGE THE PAIN THROUGH EFFORT, NOT REST.
I NEED TO MOVE, NOT STOP.
GOT TO BEAT MY WEAKNESS, NOT SURRENDER TO IT.
AND IT'S WORKING.
SIGNS
I FEEL STRONGER NOW, SHARPER, FASTER, MORE ALERT...
15

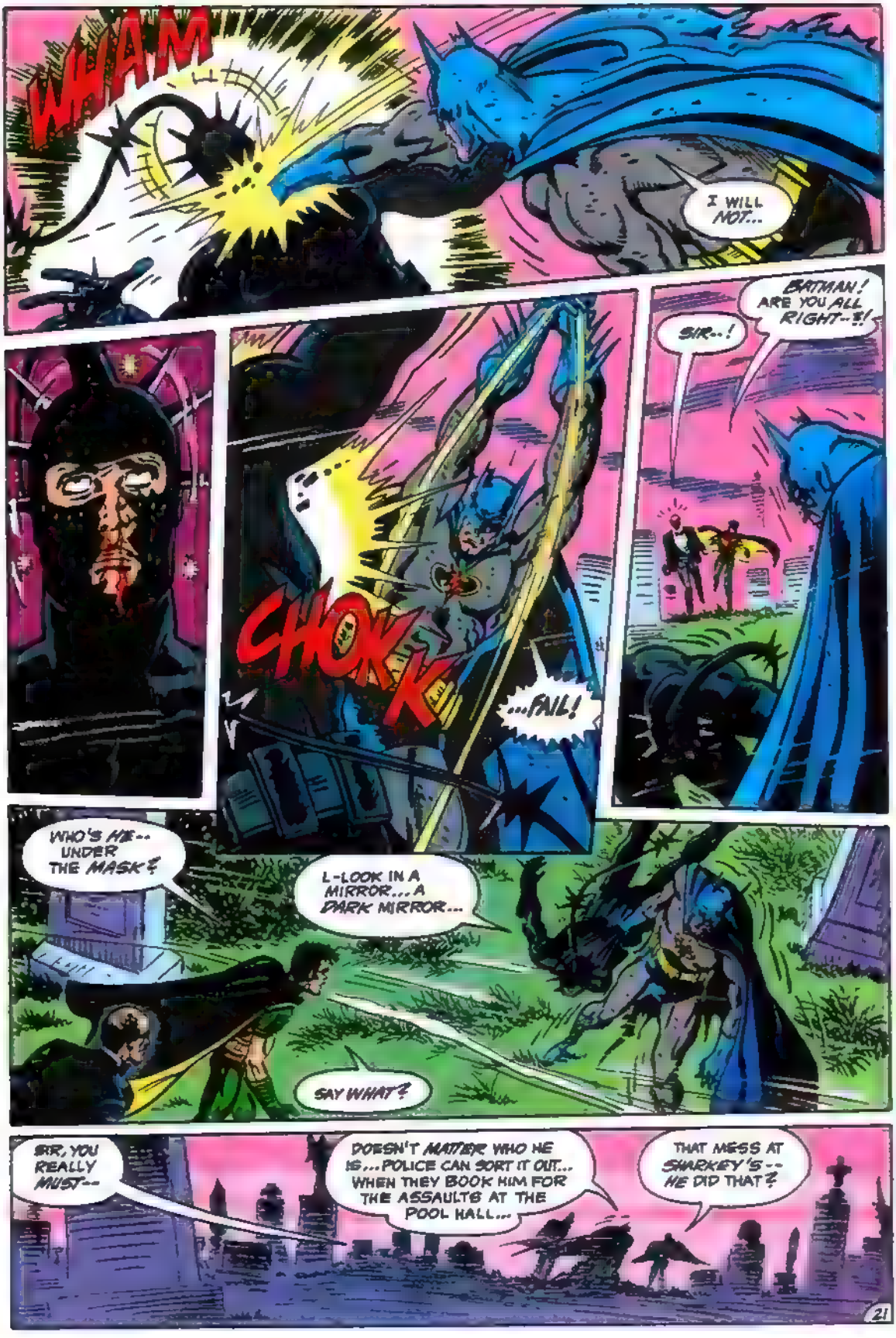
JUST HOPE IT'S NOT AN ILLUSION, OR--
I'M LOOKING FOR SOMEONE...
SHREEP!
YOU'RE LOOKING FOR... BLACK MASK.
AT LEAST YOU'RE NOT A COMEDIAN.
I'M LOOKING FOR HIM TOO-- TO BRING HIM DOWN. WHAT DO YOU WANT HIM FOR?
I'VE GOT A MASK, DON'T I? I WANT TO JOIN HIM-- AND SINCE YOU WANT HIM DOWN... SINCE YOU ALMOST KILLED HIM, I HEAR...
THAT PUTS US AT ODDS, DOESN'T IT?
METALLIC TASTE...
APPROPRIATE.
THAT IT DOES.
16

I'VE STALKED ONE MADNESS ONLY TO FIND ANOTHER...
BUT IF I CAN'T FIND AND ELIMINATE THE SOURCE OF THE EVIL--
BRAKATCH
--AT LEAST I CAN PREVENT IT FROM GROWING.
IF I CAN'T NAIL BLACK MASK HIMSELF...
...I CAN DENY HIM ANOTHER FOLLOWER.
SHRPPT
UFFFF!!

SURPRISED HIM BY NOT BACKING OFF...
WUMPT
...AND NO REASON TO DO IT NOW.
SWUKK
YOU NEED MORE SPIKES, METALHEAD.
RPT
BUT STILL TOO MANY OF THEM FOR MORE SHOTS LIKE THAT...
SPAK
UNLESS HE'S STUNNED, ONLY ONE IN THREE MIGHT LAND CLEANLY BETWEEN THE SPIKES.
STOKK
GOT TO RELY ON--


--BODY BLOWS.
OUFT
AAHN-!!
SHREEE
PRUK
SHRESHH
BUT BODY BLOWS ARE NOT GETTING IT DONE...
HE'S TIRELESS-- AND I MAY WEAR OUT BEFORE HE DOES.
CHUP
SHUDD
BROK'K
KUMPT
15

BURNING OUT... DIZZY...
RISKY OR NOT... GOT TO TRY ANOTHER HEAD SHOT...
NAH!
YOU'VE GOT NOTHING.
YOU'RE FINISHED!
NO... I'M NOT SLOWING DOWN... NOT LOSING IT...
TO CONCEDE THAT IS TO BELIEVE IT... AND TO BELIEVE IT IS TO GIVE UP...
I WILL NOT GIVE UP.
CHUPT
OOOPH!
TOO MANY...
CHEF
REPT
...SPIKES!
RNCH
PEPT
BINGO, ALFIE-- HE'S HERE!
YES. GOOD GUESS, MASTER TIM.
SKREEETCH
20


WHAM
I WILL NOT...
BATMAN! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT--?!
SIR..!
CHOKK
...FAIL!
WHO'S HE-- UNDER THE MASK?
L-LOOK IN A MIRROR... A DARK MIRROR...
SAY WHAT?
SIR, YOU REALLY MUST--
DOESN'T MATTER WHO HE IS... POLICE CAN SORT IT OUT... WHEN THEY BOOK HIM FOR THE ASSAULTS AT THE POOL HALL...
THAT MESS AT SHARKEY'S -- HE DID THAT?
21

WE HEARD IT ON THE SCANNER, BUT--
ALL THAT MATTERS IS...HE'S DOWN... BUT HE'S NOT BLACK MASK... SO I STILL...
EXHAUSTED... HEAD RINGING LOUDER... NOSE BLEEDING HARDER...
...FAILED.
GOOD LORD, TIM -- WE MUST GET HIM HOME.
ALFRED'S RIGHT-- YOU NEED SOME SERIOUS REHAB, FRIEND, AND YOU DIDN'T FAIL.
MAYBE BLACK MASK ISN'T DOWN, BUT YOU STOPPED HIM-- AND WHEN HE MAKES HIS NEXT MOVE, THEN WE NAIL HIM, RIGHT?
HE'S RIGHT... I KNOW HE IS...
M-MAYBE ... YOU'RE RIGHT.
OF COURSE I'M RIGHT...
NOW, ONCE I'VE TRUSSED UP YOUR PLAYMATE HERE... THINK YOU CAN MAKE IT BACK TO THE CAVE?
THE CAVE... Y-YES...
THE ONLY PLACE... I CAN MAKE IT.
AND TO HELL ...WITH THE BLOOD.
END

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Dear Bat-Signals,

I enjoyed the two-part "A Gotham Tale" feature in BATMANs #477 and #478 immensely. Tom Taggart's photo covers were great and the interior work was even better!

After reading the first part I wasn't sure where the story was leading, but I would never have suspected that Morris was the Gargoyle!

Batman had me worried for awhile when he kept suggesting that one of the three of them trapped in the vault would have to die; this just didn't sound like the Batman I know. But it all became clear in the end. It was a set-up! Who would have known?

This two-parter just goes to show that Batman is just as effective a crime-fighter using his brains as he is using his brawn.

Heads, not fists!

Mike Farmer
Alpharetta, Georgia

Love, not war!

Dear Scott—

About issues #477 and #478...First off, how the heck did the letter columns get switched? Well, no harm no foul.

It was good to see John Wagner back. A lot of guest writers would go with a typical story about a crazed, angst-driven Batman taking on the underworld. Leave it to Mr. Wagner to give us a well-written, thought-out, suspenseful tale—and a great new villain, to boot. It's refreshing to have a story that is more concerned with the plot and not the action (a-hem! Are you listening, Marvel?).

The story was beautifully drawn by Cam Kennedy. I'm not familiar with his work, but I must admit that I'm very impressed. It had a very British feel to it, so I guess he's another great from across the sea. Every character looked great. Anytime these cats wanna drop by, let them have a story.

I guess this letter will be printed no sooner than issue #481, so I'd like to welcome (back) Doug and Jim to BATMAN. I'm sure this issue in our hands is great.

Michael R. Lane
Berkeley, California

I'm sure it is, too. You're right; Cam is both great and from across the pond. These issues were so well received there has been a bit o' talk about those boys having another go 'round with the Dark Knight. And I thought the saying was "no blood, no foul." Maybe that's the difference between New York and Berkeley.

Dear Bat-Folks,

Re: BATMAN #477

What?! Savage criminals kill several innocent people but then don't kill Batman when they have him at point-blank range? Then they lock Bats in a vault, thus sealing themselves off from the art they came to steal?! Then the Dark Knight decides that there isn't enough air in the vault and rather than signaling for the big guy to fly in from Metropolis to punch a hole in the wall, he concludes that one of them must die?! What kind of story is this?!

Re: BATMAN #478

Oh...it's a great story!

Richard M. Taddeo
Willoughby Hills, Ohio

Signal Superman to come save him? Who do you think he is under that mask—Jimmy Olsen? You weren't alone in your reaction to the first half of the story, Richard. More than a few people were upset with issue #477... until #478, that is. F'r instance:

Dear Bat Mail,

Boy, do I feel like a fool. I wrote a letter about BATMAN #477 to ream you guys for how out-of-character Batman was, and then in #478, you turned around and explained every one of those inconsistencies and irregularities in the course of the story. Well, I sure hope you didn't print that first letter; it would make me look pretty stupid. (Now tell me, how many times do you have people write in and say they hope you don't print their letters? Not often, I would imagine!) Anyway, thanks for a decent story, and I'll catch you next issue!

Scott Haan
Lafayette, Indiana

Not if we catch you first...wait, that doesn't make sense...No, I didn't run your first letter, Scott, but now everyone knows anyway. Ha! And until this story we've never had anyone write in later and ask us not to print their previous letter. Now, Ken didn't ask us not to run his first letter, but is feeling a little embarrassed about now, aren't you, Ken?

Dear Batfolk,

Well, uh...about my previous letter (you know, the one where I mercilessly bashed the first part of "A Gotham Tale")...

Dear people, I truly apologize. Guess I look like a real Grade-A sucker, eh? Well, I guess it's nice to know that somebody fell for your little ploy, and I'll bet I wasn't the only one either. I really enjoyed part two, even though the Gargoyle looked a little like a reject from the last Gremlins movie. So, uh...keep up the good work! I guess that's what I really meant to say in the first place. Thanks.

Ken Altabef
New York, New York

Dearest Ken, yes it is nice to know that quite a few people fell hook, line and sinker (?) for our little scheme, but quite frankly, we're a bit hurt that you people don't trust us more. Don't we know best? Don't you love us anymore? >Sniff<...

To the Battiest Guys in Comics,

Denny, as editor of the Bat-line of comics, you have helped to maintain the high quality in these titles, and that is a big part of what has kept Bats on top of the list of comic book greats! I look forward to future ventures in ALL the Bat-titles! Now, on to John Wagner and Cam Kennedy in BATMAN #477 and #478:

"A Gotham Tale" was wonderfully written, with great twists on several storytelling elements:

1) Flashbacks, overused to bring up to speed readers who have missed something, were used beautifully here, letting each character give their own slant on things, as well as building tension throughout the story, since we were getting clued in piece by piece on where it was leading.

2) The old unbeatable trap, used often against Batman long ago, designed to test his wits, is turned over on this one. I never once suspected it was a trap for the Gargoyle instead, despite the clues well placed.

I have to admit, Batman seemed way out of character when he suggested one of them simply die to save the others. The Bats I know would either have figured a way out, or sacrificed himself for the others. But, John, you brought it all together. I especially loved the way the story wasn't all immediate. By using flashbacks you were able to stack history with the Gargoyle into two issues, making him a very formidable foe, who stayed at large long enough to kill 16 people! Thank you for a wonderful story!

Cam, as always, your art was superb. Your style lends itself well to the grim and gritty Gotham, and the dark-mooded Batman! As far as I'm concerned, you guys can set up shop here anytime you like for one of these mind-benders!

C. Edward Sellner
Alexandria, Virginia

Dear Batmen,

Just a few lines about "A Gotham Tale." Great job!

The covers. Too cool! Clay! What a novel idea. The Batman looked marvelous. The Gargoyle looked good, too. And when you put them together, one picture! Neat!

The story was beautiful. I really enjoyed it. The ending was an unexpected surprise! Really good!

The art was rather incredible. Cam Kennedy is an artist I'd like to see more of.

Now, a complaint. I WANT MORE ROBIN! Come on. You create an intense, awesome, powerful and youthful character, then push him off. MEATHEADS! (Just kiddin'.)

Bob Alexis
signature and address
virtually illegible

No, no, that's Metalhead. And Robin has been in the last seven (count 'em, seven) issues, not to mention his appearances in 'TEC, his upcoming miniseries, the occasional appearance in SHADOW...

Dear Bat Dudes at Bat-Signals,

WOW!!!!!!!!!!!! I thought the cover was good *last* week! Thank Tom Taggart and whoever hired him. Try it more often (please?)! Not only was the cover good, but so was the story. I wouldn't mind seeing the Gargoyle again (and Wagner and Kennedy). What a job! Where will the Gargoyle be going? Arkham or jail?

Bartman
Tyler, Texas

That's not for us to say; it's the judge's decision.

Dear Bat-People,

This is the first time I am writing to DC. First I would like to compliment you on BATMANs #477 and #478. I loved the story and couldn't take my eyes off the cover. Could you do more cover work like that? Maybe an inside art job like that? A whole story like that? I have a question. Robin hasn't been in a comic since #472. When will he appear? One more question. When will he fight someone big at the side of the Batman? Joker maybe?

Justin Weddle
Los Angeles, California

Robin's back and fighting lots of big guys with the Batman. An entire book of photo art? Sounds like way too big a job to me, but who knows?

Dear Denny and Kelley,

I've been reading Batman for about 40 years. "A Gotham Tale" was the first story (that I remember) in which Batman laid such an elaborate trap for a villain. Great! I loved the artwork—especially the expressions on the face of the Gargoyle. I found it incredible that Cam Kennedy would convey so many perfect human emotions on an inhuman face. One question, though—why did the Gargoyle's eyes change from red to green? I can't even think of a wise-guy answer to that one.

Oh, one more thing—does Batman's cape have shoulder pads? His shoulders look weird all squared off like they are in #478.

So long for now from one of your "oldest" readers.

Al Lippert
North Bend, Washington

Hey, Al, now that's loyalty (not to mention good taste). As for the Gargoyle's peepers—he wears colored contact lenses? His eyes change colors depending on his mood? He was caught in the headlights of an oncoming car? They change with the seasons? Or, the real reason: they were only red in the flashback sequence, much the same way as Batman's costume was colored in shades of brown and yellow. Your choice.

And now a few words on BATMAN #479, "Pagan":

Dear Scott,

Perhaps I should bow my head in shame, but I was rooting for Pagan in BATMAN #479. I was disappointed she was apprehended.

Way to go, lady!

Jan C. Childress
Brooklyn, New York

Believe me, you weren't alone in feeling that way, Jan.

Dear Dennis,

"Pagan" is the kind of story that leaves me thinking for some time after I've closed the book. The reason it has such an effect is that I feel Marian's actions were justified. The men who brutally beat her sister were no more than rabid animals. As such, they should have been destroyed. It's in times like these that I prefer the Old Testament law of "an eye for an eye" to what passes for justice in the world these days.

Maybe I am barbaric in my thinking, but it's only because closing your eyes to what people get away with in this world is too difficult to take. Those men didn't just destroy one life, they destroyed a minimum of four.

This story is much too frightening because it hits too close to too many truths. Having to deal with the vengeful demon within me is just one of them. The fact that things like what happened to Sondra actually happen in the real world is the hardest pill to swallow. And they dare use the term "civilized"?

Mike Aragona
Montreal, Quebec

Dear Scott,

The "end" of BATMAN #479 had better not be the final appearance of Pagan, if you know what's good for you!

An intelligent, strong female antihero on par with Batman is hard to come by. In a way, she reminds me of what Kara (of JLE) could be in this role.

Oh, wonderfully dark art by Tom Mandrake. Where can we find his art next?

Melissa Page
still in Kentucky

Since you undoubtedly already picked up this year's 'TEC annual, the next place to find Tom's art would be in the upcoming SPECTRE monthly written by none other than that Gotham Nights kinda guy, John Ostrander. The writing is great, and everyone agrees the artwork is Tom's best ever, and that's saying something.

Dear Bat-Signals,

I am writing to inform you of how truly interesting I found BATMAN #479. Rarely have I found a new villain (particularly a female one) so socially relevant, or inspired, as Pagan. Since I am currently taking a college course that deals with the topic of sexism, I was glad to see that the comics industry was able to deal with this important issue in such an unusual fashion. I don't mean to imply that I think Pagan's actions should be condoned, but rather she should serve as a symbol to all men that there is just so far you can push someone. If you are not responsible enough, or unable to control your own actions, you just may end up with Pagan knocking down your door.

Geoffrey Hill, Jr.
Milltown, New Jersey

P.S. I thought Tom Mandrake's artwork was really super.

Hi, Kelley,

I loved the BATMAN #479 storyline. Keep up the good work.

Trevor Pemberton
Marysville, Washington

Thanks, Trevor, we'll do our best.

OVER IN SHADOW: The Shadow of the Bat falls on "The Ugly American." There's a lunatic running around Gotham obsessed with the idea of patriotism, and the Batman doesn't look like his idea of a good American. It's in SHADOW OF THE BAT #6, by Alan Grant, Dan Jurgens and Dick Giordano, on sale now.

OVER IN DETECTIVE: Batman is forced to team up with the Huntress to bring down a gang of thugs. The tables are turned when they find the hoods have "Diplomatic Immunity." It's in DETECTIVE COMICS #652, by Chuck Dixon, Scott Hanna, and guest penciller Graham Nolan, on sale now.

NEXT ISSUE: There's a contract out on the toughest man in Gotham—Jim Gordon. Can the Batman find him before he falls to the Head-hunter? Find out in "Box of Blood" by Doug Moench and Jim Aparo.

—Scott Peterson
the lengths that I will go to...

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